

REMARKS

Claims 1-23 are pending. Claims 1 and 2 are amended. Claims 15-23 are cancelled. No new matter is submitted. Accordingly, entry and consideration of this Response is respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the acknowledgement of entry and consideration of the Preliminary Amendment and Response to Species Election previously filed in this application, as indicated in item 1 of the Office Action.

Further, Applicants concur with the characterization of claims 1-14, as set forth in item 2 of the Office Action. Moreover, the cancellation of claims 15-23 herein renders claims 1-14 allowable as indicated in item 3 of the Office Action. Allowance of claims 1-14 is thus respectfully requested.

With respect to item 4 of the Office Action, Applicants submit herewith certified copies of Japanese Patent Application No. 2001-339786 filed November 5, 2001, and Japanese Patent Application No. 2002-297915 filed October 10, 2002. Accordingly, entry thereof and acknowledgement of the claimed foreign priority on the record is respectfully requested.

With respect to item 5 of the Office Action, Applicants submit that the Information Disclosure Statement filed December 11, 2003 was compliant and provided the required legible copy of each cited foreign patent document listed therein. Copies of the December 11, 2003 Information Disclosure Statement, the references and English language abstracts submitted therewith, and the date stamped receipt indicating receipt thereof in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office is attached as evidence of a compliant submission. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection to the December 11, 2003 Information Disclosure Statement is respectfully requested. Further, a fully initialed PTO-1449 form indicating consideration of all references identified in the December 11, 2003 Information Disclosure Statement is also respectfully

requested.

With respect to item 6 of the Office Action, Applicants appreciate the indication that the drawings submitted with the application on December 11, 2003 are approved.

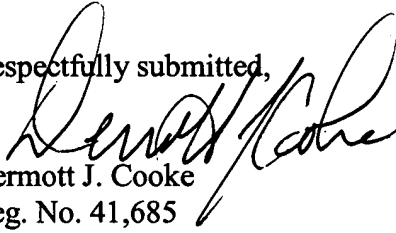
With respect to item 7 of the Office Action, Applicants review of the Specification has not determined the existence of minor errors therein. Accordingly, no Specification amendments are made herein.

With respect to item 8 of the Office Action, claims 1 and 2 are objected to for alleged informalities. Claims 1 and 2 are each amended to obviate the alleged informalities. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objections thereto claims 1 and 2 is respectfully requested.

Applicants submit that the claims presented patentably distinguish over the art applied. Accordingly, prompt allowance of the application in view of the remarks set forth herein is respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner determine that anything further is desirable to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,


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